Soccer!

Soccer, or European football, has become increasingly popular around the world. This set contains passages about a variety of players of the game; both human and animal! If your student is a soccer fan, there’s sure to be a story of interest for them.

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Cali Scores a Goal

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

It was the last game of the season. Cali had been playing soccer all summer. She really enjoyed running around with the other players in her bright blue uniform, chasing the black and white ball across the grassy field. As much as she tried, though, Cali still had not scored one single goal.

“Don’t give up,” said her coach. Before each game, they had a practice session. He showed Cali and her team how to pass the ball to each other and take shots at the goal. Cali was pretty good at passing the ball, but even during practices, she couldn’t kick the ball past the goalkeeper. She wondered if she should quit soccer for good.

“Don’t give up,” said her teammates. Some had been playing soccer for a couple of years, and some were new to the game just like her. “You just need to keep trying and you will get better.” So Cali stayed on the team and did her best.

“Don’t give up,” said Uncle George and Aunt Lisa. But it was half-time, and Cali was feeling frustrated. She was trying! Every time she got a chance to kick the ball, it would go in the wrong direction or a player from the other team would take control of it. She sucked on her orange slice and pouted. Maybe she would try a different sport next summer.

The break was over and the referee blew her whistle to start the game again. The two teams walked back onto the field, both determined to win. Cali bent tied up her shoelace and heard her aunt whisper in her ear. “Look for an opportunity to get the ball. You can do it.”

Cali stood up and took a deep breath. Even if she didn’t get one goal all summer, she knew that she had tried her best. That was something to be proud of. So she smiled at her aunt and headed to her position. The whistle blew, and the game resumed.

The score was tied with one goal each. The yellow team was pretty good, but Cali’s blue team was fast. The girls’ ponytails bounced as they ran, with many feet kicking frantically at the ball when it came near them. Cali was off to the side when the ball headed her way. She ran over to it and kicked it. She watched it land right in front of a girl on the yellow team who expertly stopped it and sent it back in the other direction. Cali sighed.

The little girl watched the ball go back and forth between the players. Her heart wasn’t in the game anymore. Cali decided she’d wait until the game was over and then she was going to hang up her soccer cleats for good. Cali started daydreaming about becoming a hip-hop dancer instead.

She was woken from her daydream by some music that was definitely not hip-hop. It was the sweet, happy jingle of the ice cream truck. It was driving right beside the soccer field, playing its music loudly to attract customers. The truck stopped. The music kept playing.
The players on both teams turned to look at it. A few girls pointed to it and cheered. Some called out to their parents to buy them one. The soccer game had practically stopped. Cali looked around and saw the soccer ball close by, ignored by the nearest yellow player. Cali smiled. She looked at her aunt, who nodded at her. “Now!” her aunt yelled.

Cali didn’t hesitate. She dashed over to the ball. She dribbled it between her feet, moving forward toward the net of the yellow team. By the time the other girls had noticed, Cali was positioned right in front of the net. The goalkeeper was standing to one side, also looking at the ice cream truck. She turned back quickly to guard the net as Cali kicked the ball hard.

The keeper reached out her gloved hand. The ball touched the tips of her fingers as it swooshed past, right into the top corner of the net.

The referee blew her whistle. “Goal!”
Questions

1. Why did Cali think about giving up soccer?

2. Why did everyone keep telling her not to give up?

3. What does this story teach the reader?

4. How do you think Cali feels now? Do you think she will play soccer next summer?
Rocky and the Squirrels

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

Rocky Raccoon was playing by himself at the park. He noticed a group of squirrels nearby, playing soccer with an acorn. It looked like fun, and Rocky wished he could play too. However, thinking about talking to others made him nervous and he wasn’t sure how to start.

Why would they want to play with me? He thought. I’m not special. Maybe there’s a way I could make myself different. Then they might be more interested in me.

Rocky scratched his furry chin and wondered what he could do. If he pretended to be from another country, the squirrels would think that was cool. He could change the way he talked to sound different. He looked around for anything to help him look different, too. There wasn’t much in the park except for an empty potato chip bag. Rocky grabbed it and placed it on his head.

“Here goes nothing,” he mumbled, and with a swaggering step he ambled over to the squirrels. They stopped chasing each other to look at the raccoon. “G’day mates,” he said.

“Oh, hi …” replied a couple of the animals, not sure what to make of Rocky in his funny hat and strange accent.

“How’s it going? Fine arvo for a game of footy, don’t ya think?” Rocky said.

The squirrels just looked at him. One of them shrugged his shoulders. Finally, one replied, “What did you just say?”

“Uh … nice afternoon for a soccer game, right?” Rocky stammered, embarrassed.

“Oh, yeah, sure it is. Sorry, we didn’t understand you at first.”

“That’s probably because I’m from Australia,” replied the raccoon. “It’s really far away.”

“Is that so? How did you get here?” asked a curious squirrel.

“I’m kind of a world traveler,” boasted Rocky.

A little brown squirrel spoke up. “I have a squirrel cousin in Australia. He told me they don’t have raccoons in that country.”

Rocky’s smile dropped. Was that true? Now they must know he was faking his accent. How embarrassing! Maybe he should just run away from them. He took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry. That wasn’t the truth. I made up being from Australia so you would think I’m interesting…
and want to play with me. But I’m just a regular raccoon.” He looked at the ground, afraid they
would laugh at him.

But the squirrels did not laugh. They gathered closer around him. A grey squirrel reached out and
patted Rocky on the shoulder. “Let me tell you something, buddy, you may not be from Australia,
but you are certainly very interesting!” He smiled.

The little brown squirrel piped up, “Yeah, you don’t have to pretend to be something you’re not. If
you wanted to come play soccer with us, you could have just asked!” The others nodded in
agreement.

“Do you still want to play?” The grey squirrel tossed the acorn to the raccoon.

Rocky nodded shyly. “Yes, please. That would be great.”

“Then come on! But first you might want to take that – thing – off your head.” He gestured to the
chip bag Rocky was still wearing.

With a laugh, Rocky knocked the empty bag off his head and ran off to play with his new friends.
Questions

1. Why did Rocky want to be different?

2. What did the raccoon do to try to appear more interesting?

3. What does piped mean here: "The little brown squirrel piped up, “Yeah, you don’t have to pretend to be something you’re not.”

4. If you had been one of the squirrels, what would you thought of Rocky?
Andrew loved cats. He liked their soft fur and pointy ears. He liked the way they walked so softly that you could barely hear them. He even liked when they licked his hand with their rough tongues. Andrew was very excited to have a kitten of his own.

The kitten was gray with a white belly. It had a little pink nose and green eyes. The new kitten came home in a cardboard box. Andrew named it Slush, since it looked like dirty gray snow on top but had clean snow underneath on its white belly.

It was Andrew's job to feed the kitten every morning and evening. When the kitten spilled food on the floor, Andrew had to wipe it up. He also had to make sure there was fresh water to drink.

Andrew made sure he did his job every day, but he wished that Slush would play with him. Slush spent most of the day sleeping in his box or playing with a small ball that had a bell inside.

One day, Andrew saw Slush pushing the ball with his paw. Andrew laughed. Slush looked like he wanted to play soccer! Andrew knelt down on the floor and reached for the ball with his hand.

Quick as a flash, Slush smacked Andrew's hand with his paw.

Andrew jumped back. "Hey! That wasn't very nice!"

Andrew was disappointed. He wanted to play with Slush, but Slush wasn't being very friendly.

Andrew's Aunt Stephanie wanted to help. "Slush is trying to play with you, but he doesn't understand that his claws can hurt. Let's make a better toy to play with."

Aunt Stephanie took a piece of blue yarn out of her sewing basket. She tied one end to the ball and handed the other end to Andrew. "Try pulling the ball along the floor and see what happens," she said.

Andrew slowly pulled the ball away from Slush. Slush looked at Andrew, then back at the ball. Then Slush jumped on the ball!

Now, Andrew laughed. He pulled the ball again, and Slush pounced again.

Andrew was happy to have a game he and Slush could play together. He knew he and Slush would be good friends.
Questions

1. Based on the story, what does "pounced" mean?

2. What kind of person is Andrew?

3. How does Andrew feel when Slush claws him?

4. How does Aunt Stephanie solve Andrew's problem?